



Why

THE FARM BILL

MATTERS for **GREATER PHILADELPHIA**



WHY THE FARM BILL MATTERS

IN AMERICA, NO CHILD SHOULD GO HUNGRY, AND NO PARENT SHOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN EATING HEALTHY AND EATING ENOUGH.

Established in 1933, the Farm Bill is the United States government's primary vehicle for funding policies and programs relating to food and agriculture—from food safety and nutrition education to employment practices and conservation efforts. Every five years, Congress reauthorizes this sweeping piece of legislation in an effort to **prevent hunger, bring fresh foods to communities lacking access, and add vibrancy and diversity to the local food system.**

However, funding for critical programs that uplift our food system and provide nutrition benefits to millions of Americans is under threat.

The Trump administration announced its plans for the 2018 Farm Bill, including billions of dollars in cuts that would directly impact families and farmers across the country. The plan, which includes government delivery of a canned food box, has the potential to dramatically disrupt the American food system from farm to fork—exacerbating hunger and health problems, and resulting in store closings and job losses in urban and rural communities alike.

In the Philadelphia region, these issues threaten to dismantle a strong and thriving community foodscape—from food retailers in danger of losing their jobs to farmers at risk of losing their livelihood. Urban and rural communities are inextricably linked through the food system, and each piece of the Farm Bill addresses these connections in one form or another. Food ties us together; and together, we can ensure our food system is resilient, equitable and healthy for years to come.



The Philadelphia region currently relies on over \$86 million per month in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to help families address hunger and afford a nutritious diet. SNAP benefits (sometimes referred to as “food stamps”) are also a vital economy booster in underserved communities: These dollars flow directly from recipients to local businesses like grocery stores and farmers markets—and those retailers and farmers, in turn, provide jobs and economic stability to neighborhoods across the country.

Farm Bill cuts would mean that 670,000 Philadelphia-area residents would struggle with more hunger, more malnutrition and more long-term health problems. In Pennsylvania, 44% of SNAP recipients are under the age of 18, and another 23% are elderly or disabled. Our most vulnerable populations will be at risk of losing nutrition benefits, when what the region needs are children who are healthy and ready to learn, and elderly and disabled individuals who experience a good quality of life.

In response to threats to SNAP and programs that support and sustain strong regional food systems, a group of anti-hunger advocates, environmentalists, public health professionals, local food advocates, urban and rural farmers, and food access organizations from the Philadelphia area have come together to identify Farm Bill programs and policies that directly impact the region; and collaborate on a set of recommendations for Congress to consider as the Farm Bill approaches reauthorization in 2018. These regional voices, along with those from communities across the Delaware Valley, believe that a strong Farm Bill is a vehicle to address hunger, create jobs, improve health, strengthen family farms and protect the environment.



Equity from Farm to Fork

Only 1 in 10 American children eat enough fruits and vegetables, and one-third are obese. Poorer areas and communities of color have fewer grocery stores and less access to fresh fruits and vegetables. This difficulty in finding healthy food close to home makes leading a healthy life more challenging. These same communities also suffer from higher rates of diet-related disease such as heart disease and diabetes.

The Farm Bill can support more affordable fresh produce and other nutritious foods for SNAP recipients in communities across the country, while empowering shoppers to make choices that support their health and well-being. In fact, the SNAP program is the most significant income support program to address health and income inequality in the U.S. More needs to be done to provide access and create living-wage jobs so that fewer Americans need to supplement their income with food stamps.

The Farm Bill can also take steps to reverse the structural racial inequity our country's farming system was built upon. According to the USDA Agriculture Census, 90% of farmers in the United States are white, and farmers of color do not typically access federal grant and loan programs. When they do, they receive less funding than their white counterparts. **We need to protect funds, remove barriers and create opportunities for socially disadvantaged farmers**—including farmers of color, immigrants, refugees, veterans and youth.

Together, we can work toward a healthier, more equitable food system of which we can all be proud and from which everyone can equally benefit.

ACHIEVING A VISION OF EQUITY

“The farm bill has the ability to strengthen local food systems, nurture healthy communities and create equitable access to resources for residents, farmers and community providers. To achieve a vision of a more equitable and just food system every aspect of the farm bill should be viewed with an intentional racial equity lens. Along with priority consideration for farmers of color, who have been historically marginalized by past farm bill efforts, urban agriculture should be recognized and valued.”

—**Soil Generation**, a coalition of Black and Brown-run Philadelphia organizations and individuals who support equity and social justice for community-managed green space, gardens, and farms through advocacy, grassroots organizing, and community education. To learn more, visit groundedinphilly.org/soil-generation-about.

SNAP, The Hunger Safety Net

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides a **crucial safety net against hunger across the country**, for over 42 million Americans. After unemployment insurance, SNAP is the most responsive federal program providing additional assistance during economic downturns. It also is an important nutritional support for low-wage working families, low-income seniors, and people with disabilities with fixed incomes.

In the Philadelphia area, about one in three residents participates in SNAP, and **40% of participants are children**. Ten percent of our population lives in “deep poverty,” defined as below half the national federal poverty rate.

In Pennsylvania, the maximum income for SNAP recipients is 160% of the poverty line—or about \$32,700 for a family of three. But the majority of program participants live below the poverty line. Benefits average \$125 per beneficiary every month—which still does not cover what people need to eat a healthy diet; the gap is then made up by food banks and church pantries and soup kitchens through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

SNAP dollars help families purchase nutritious food and prevent tough decisions when it comes to paying for other costs like medical care, prescriptions, rent, transportation and utilities. This program is foundational to the health and economy of our region, and cuts would increase hunger and malnutrition and have ripple effects that impact our entire food system.

Recommendations:

- Congress should not allow any policy changes that result in an increase in hunger for American families and children. This means **no cuts, no block grants, and no structural changes to SNAP**.
- Congress should **fully fund The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** to further support the fight against hunger.

SNAP FACTS

- SNAP reaches **1 in 4 children** nationally.
- Children who receive SNAP are **18% more likely to graduate high school** than their peers who did not receive SNAP.
- **2/3 of SNAP participants** are children, seniors or people with disabilities.
- SNAP saves **\$2,100 on healthcare**, on average, per senior enrolled.
- The average SNAP benefits per meal equate to **\$1.40**.
- SNAP provides at least **10x** more meals than food banks.
- Over **1/2** of SNAP recipients leave the program within **1 year**.

Source: Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council



A WITNESS TO HUNGER'S STORY

“When I receive SNAP benefits at the beginning of the month, I am eager to receive them because my cupboards are low, my refrigerator has no food, and my husband and I are under a lot of stress. I’m not a lazy person. I work hard. Nobody wakes up and says, ‘I want to be in poverty.’ Most people who live in poverty are already struggling and are trying to do the best they can with what they have. Programs like SNAP work and can help lift people out of poverty. Losing SNAP benefits would be devastating to me and my family. Poverty isn’t something you can put a Band-Aid on. The belief that if you force someone to be resourceful, it will go away, is simply not true.”

—**Tianna Gaines-Turner, wife and mother of three from the Frankford section of Philadelphia; advocate and member of Witnesses to Hunger**

Witnesses to Hunger is a Philadelphia-based advocacy project partnering with the real experts on hunger—mothers and caregivers of young children who have experienced poverty. To learn more, visit centerforhungerfreecommunities.org.

Strong Farms and Healthy Food

Greater Philadelphia is fortunate to have a strong family farming tradition with a focus on fruits and vegetable production. We are also leading national efforts to improve health by increasing access to nutritious foods in underserved urban and rural communities. We can continue to reduce rates of diet-related disease like diabetes and heart disease as we create jobs in the food sector through a focus on access, education and healthy food incentive programs.



Ideally, consumers should have many choices when it comes to purchasing healthy, locally grown foods, from grocery stores and farmers markets to bodegas and superettes selling fresh fruits and vegetables. To ensure that these food resources are sustained, it is important to build demand for healthy food by empowering consumers to make healthy choices. The SNAP-Ed program is an innovative and effective national effort to educate and engage SNAP participants around healthy eating. And for low-income consumers, making nutritious, quality food affordable through incentives helps stretch food dollars to make these fresh foods more attainable.

Recommendations:

- **Reduce barriers to healthy eating** by investing in the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) healthy food incentive programs, allowing a nutritious diet to be in reach.
- **Support regional food systems** by supporting farmers markets, food hubs, and small- and mid-size farming operations, both rural and urban by protecting “good food” grant programs like the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program and Value-Added Producer Grants.
- **Invest in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program voucher initiative** to help more low-income seniors and stimulate the urban farming movement through the Community Food Project Grant program, and provide more funding for farmers of “Specialty Crops,” otherwise known as fruits and vegetables.
- **Increase socially disadvantaged farmer participation** in working lands conservation programs within both the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program and sustain funding for the 2501 Program that supports outreach to socially disadvantaged, veteran and minority farmers and ranchers.
- **Fully fund the SNAP-Ed program to reach all SNAP participants**



FARMERS MARKETS AND FOOD BUCKS

“A substantial portion of our sales come from food assistance dollars. It’s not just that we get that revenue, but it’s that revenue that makes the farmers market run in the first place. The Farm Bill needs to place more emphasis on farmers markets, including providing marketing dollars to educate customers about where their local markets are located, what they can buy using SNAP, and what programs might exist to incentivize them to shop more. For example, we have a lot of customers who, when they run out of SNAP benefits at the end of the month, are still able to purchase fresh food because they’ve been saving up their Philly Food Bucks. It really does allow people to stretch their food dollars.”

—Landon Jeffries, farmer, Root Mass Farm (Oley, PA)



Creating Jobs

By lifting up farmers and investing in SNAP, the Farm Bill supports millions of jobs in America. In many lower-income areas, food retailers rely on SNAP to stay in business, and these dollars also flow to rural farmers who, in turn, maintain the food supply.

The Farm Bill also presents new opportunities to create jobs with healthy and local products. Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFIs) are a proven, economically sustainable solution to the lack of fresh food access in underserved communities commonly known as “food deserts.” These public-private partnerships provide one-time grants and loans for the development or renovation of healthy food retail, such as grocery stores, corner stores, farmers markets, food hubs and regional processing facilities. Initially developed in 2001, Pennsylvania’s HFFI program approved 88 projects for funding, representing 1.67 million square feet of retail space and 5,000 jobs created or retained, making healthy food more available to an estimated 400,000 of the state’s underserved residents.

Congress must use our nation’s largest food and agricultural bill to provide quality jobs in urban and rural America.

Recommendations:

- **Fully fund the USDA’s new Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)** to support grocery stores, farmers markets and food hubs that improve access and create jobs in underserved urban and rural areas.
- **Include farming and ranching as “public service” occupations** in order to allow farmers to qualify for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. Grow the next generation of farmers, and thereby strengthen the country’s food security and food supply by removing these financial barriers for young and beginning farmers and ranchers.



Regional
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ACCESS TO SUPERMARKETS

“Supermarkets are vital to communities: They provide fresh and affordable food access, create jobs, support the food system, and contribute to the overall economic development of a neighborhood. For Burns’ Family Neighborhood Markets, a retailer-owned cooperative operating seven Fresh Grocer and two ShopRite supermarkets in the greater Philadelphia area, SNAP has played an integral role in allowing stores to open and operate successfully in communities that need them the most.

Most of the Burns’ Family stores in Philadelphia are in areas that were previously classified as ‘food deserts.’ Not only do these stores now provide low-income communities with increased access to healthy, affordable foods, they also hire locally and provide job training and opportunities for advancement for individuals from the communities where they operate.

Any cuts to SNAP would have a negative domino effect that would be universally problematic and, in some stores and neighborhoods, catastrophic, resulting in job loss, more hunger and more poverty. A decrease in SNAP funding would result in a decrease in available food dollars for shoppers. A decrease in food dollars results in sales loss for stores. Sales decreases result in reduced labor hours, job loss, potential store closures and, therefore, the re-emergence of food deserts. Cuts to SNAP would also have dire economic setbacks for future store development, especially in low-income areas. Cuts or limits to the SNAP program would hurt people in need, hurt businesses, and be detrimental to our economy.”

—Carly Spross, Marketing Director, Metro Philly Management, Burns’ Family Neighborhood Markets



Protecting the Environment

With the threat of climate change, the Farm Bill must also work to address environmental protection, conservation and sustainable agriculture. By incentivizing crop diversification, we can reduce the amount of pesticides and fertilizer needed for farming, thereby improving the safety of our food and protecting those who grow it.

Increasing access to nutritious food is not possible without clean and abundant natural resources. The Philadelphia region benefits from the rich, fertile farmlands of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware—but much of that farmland is being lost to residential and commercial development. Protecting this land, along with its adjacent Chesapeake Bay watershed, is an important priority for the next Farm Bill. Land preservation ensures healthy soil and crops, while protecting our waterways ensures sound ecosystems and a safe drinking water supply for over 15 million Americans.

By securing more protection for our farmland and waterways, we can safeguard our most productive sources of nutritious food and drink for our residents.

Recommendations:

- **Support the growth of sustainable and organic agriculture** through market creation and infrastructure development.
- **Support targeted marketplace campaigns that build demand for sustainable farm products.**
- **Prevent climate change** through investment in the USDA's Renewable Energy for America Program.
- **Fully fund the Farm Bill's conservation and farmland protection programs.**
- **Fund the Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP)** to match demand. These funds support the transition of farms under conservation efforts back into production, with transition priority given to socially disadvantaged, minority and veteran farmers.
- **Appropriate enough funds to support the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, which provides farmers and ranchers with financial cost-sharing options and technical assistance to implement conservation practices on their working lands.

INNOVATIONS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH

“Helping community members stay healthy has been part of our mission for more than half a century. And we know that healthy food access is critical to community health. Diabetes, obesity and hypertension all have a direct food-related connection. For us to take a preventive approach to these major diseases, we must really think comprehensively around the intersection of food and health.”

By offering nutrition education and health screenings to Philadelphians at corner stores and farmers markets, we can actually meet our patients out in the world, where they live, work and play. And, by adapting national nutrition incentive models to the hospital setting with our new Food Bucks Rx pilot, we can actually prescribe that our patients eat healthier, and provide the resources for them to do so affordably. These solutions and interventions are meeting more and more of our patients' needs, and they're paying off in the long run: Health care institutions and food access partners can combat food insecurity and health disparities simply by working together to empower individuals to make healthy decisions and create systems where the healthy choice is the easy choice.”

—Chinwe Onyekere, Associate Administrator, Lankenau Medical Center

Regional
Voice





CALL TO ACTION: RAISING OUR VOICE

Now is the time to get engaged and ensure our voices are heard by policymakers. We know that a comprehensive approach including access, education and incentives can help us build a more healthy and equitable food system.

The Farm Bill will have a critical impact on our region, and by working together and raising our voice, we can grow jobs, improve health, reduce climate change, expand opportunities for small urban and rural farmers and ensure that no child goes hungry.

About the Greater Philadelphia Regional Farm Bill Working Group

The Greater Philadelphia Regional Farm Bill Working Group was first convened in 2012 with the goal of protecting and strengthening food policies in what became the 2014 Farm Bill. We learned from that process that regional voices matter. We produced a document on regional priorities, from which many key elements were included in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The group was reconvened in the fall of 2017 with a mix of returning members and new faces, including anti-hunger advocates, environmentalists, public health professionals, local food advocates, urban growers and rural farmers, and food access organizations. With a new Farm Bill reauthorization set for 2018 under a new administration, the group set to work finding areas of consensus and identifying programs and policies that directly impact the Philadelphia region. The group is also working on grassroots strategies to engage and educate community members who will be directly affected by cuts or changes to SNAP and other Farm Bill policies.

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WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

American Heart Association · Earnestine Walker
Benefits Data Trust · Nijah Famous
Campbell Soup Company · Kate Barrett
Center for Hunger-Free Communities · Kate Scully, Mariana Chilton
Central PA Food Bank · Erin Wachter
City of Philadelphia Department of Health · Amanda Wagner, Jennifer Aquilante
Coalition Against Hunger · Bill England, Kathy Fisher
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission · Alison Hastings, Amy Verbofsky
Enterprise Center · Jeff Wicklund, Sulky McInnes
Feeding PA · Jane Clements-Smith
Food Policy Advisory Coalition · Hannah Chatterjee
Fresh Grocer · Carly Spross
Greener Partners · Helen Nadel
Healthy Food for Healthy Kids DE · Thiandra Manzara
Lankenau Medical Center/Main Line Health · Chinwe Onyekere
Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity · Katie Dockhorn
National Young Farmers Coalition · Kimberly Cook
Penn Environment · David Masur
Penn State Extension · John Byrnes, Suzanne Weltman
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society · Jeff Barg, Justin Trezza
Philabundance · Emma Kornetsky, Glenn Bergman
Philly Urban Creators · Sonia Gailber
Reading Terminal Market · Layla Eltannir
SHARE · Steveanna Wynn
Soil Generation · Kirtrina Baxter
The Food Trust · John Weidman, Dwayne Wharton, Deb Bentzel, Jordan Muse
UPenn · Domenic Vitello
Urban League of Philadelphia · Andrea Custis
Urban Tree Connection · Noelle Warford
Vietlead · Lan Dinh



The Food Trust
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GET INVOLVED

- Join HealthyFoodAccess.org's Policy Action Network at healthyfoodaccess.org for updates and ways to stay engaged
- Read more about the Farm Bill at sustainableagriculture.net
- Attend a meeting of the Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Committee at phillyfpac.org
- Contact your elected officials and let them know why the Farm Bill is important to you
- Check out the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger's SNAP petition at hungercoalition.org/advocacy
- Learn more about the nation's leading SNAP advocate, the Food Research and Action Center, at frac.org
- Find out how you can support farmers across the country at farmersmarketcoalition.org